

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: VISIT TO MODDER BEE PRISON TO SEE DR. NTHATO MOTLANA

REF: CAPE TOWN 509

1. POLOFF ACCOMPANIED BY NATIONALIST PARTY FIGURE JOHN ERASMUS, WENT TO MODDER BEE PRISON TO SEE DETAINED COMMITTEE OF TEN CHAIRMAN NTHATO MOTLANA. (NOTE: ERASMUS, A DEFEATED NATIONALIST MP CANDIDATE FOR JOHANNESBURG AREA, INTERCEDED ON BEHALF OF POLOFF WITH MINISTER OF JUSTICE KRUGER FOR PERMISSION TO SEE SECTION 10 DETAINEES. KRUGER GAVE HIS PERMISSION ON CONDITION VISIT WAS UNOFFICIAL, AS PREVIOUS VISITS HAVE BEEN, AND ERASMUS BE PRESENT. LAST ATTEMPT TO VISIT MODDERBEE BY POLOFF, PRIOR TO ERASMUS INTERCESSION, RESULTED IN FLAT REFUSAL, BOTH AT PRISON AND BY SECURITY
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POLICE.

2. VISIT WAS PERMITTED IN A PRIVATE ROOM WITH ONLY ERASMUS, POLOFF AND MOTLANA PRESENT. PRISON OFFICIALS WERE NEXT DOOR AND EVEN ERASMUS CONCEDED VISIT WAS PROBABLY BEING LISTENED TO.

3. MOTLANA WELCOMED VISIT, RECOGNIZING POLOFF FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS. HE WAS IN GOOD SPIRITS, HAVING JUST RETURNED FROM JOGGING AROUND PRISON YARD. HE DID NOT MIND ERASMUS' PRESENCE AND WAS, IN FACT, OPEN AND CANDID, VERGING ON JUBILANT.

4. MOTLANA CONFIRMED SPLIT AMONG DETAINEES (REFTEL) SAYING A GREAT DEAL OF BITTERNESS WAS PRESENTLY DIRECTED BY YOUNGER SASO-TYPES TOWARD OLDER BPC AND COMMITTEE OF TEN MEMBERS. HE SAID MOST OF ILL-FEELING AT PRESENT WAS EXHIBITED BY SASO-TYPES TOWARDS RELATIVELY MORE MODERATES SUCH AS HIMSELF, TOM MANTHATA (BPC), KEN RACHIDI (BPC) AND OTHER COMMITTEE OF TEN MEMBERS. MOTLANA SEEMED TO EXHIBIT A PATIENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SASO-TYPES, HOWEVER, MUCH LIKE A FATHER WOULD WHO SEES HIS CHILDREN MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES HE HIMSELF DID.

5. MOTLANA SAID DETAINEES SAW THE EPISODE INVOLVING GATSHA BUTHELEZI'S EVICTION FROM THE SOBUKWE FUNERAL ON TELEVISION AND THERE WAS "MUCH JUBILATION" AT BUTHELEZI'S DISCOMFITURE. MOTLANA SAID HE WAS "SO EXCITED I COULDN'T SLEEP" AND ADDED MOREOVER, "I'VE WARNED BUTHELEZI MANY TIMES HE WAS ASKING FOR IT BY PLAYING THESE POLITICAL GAMES".

6. DR. MOTLANA SAID HE HAD BEEN VISITED BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE KRUGER WHO CHIDED HIM BY SAYING "DR. MOTLANA, I PUT YOU AWAY IN THE 50'S, I PUT YOU AWAY LAST YEAR (1976) AND NOW I'VE HAD TO DO IT AGAIN. WHEN I LET YOU OUT THIS TIME, WILL YOU PLEASE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GO HOME AND BE A DOCTOR TO YOUR PEOPLE? WILL YOU PLEASE MAKE LOTS OF MONEY AND QUIT WORRYING THE POLICE?" MOTLANA SAID HE HAD BEEN ASSURED ALL DETAINEES WERE SCHEDULED FOR RELEASE, BUT SOME SOONER THAN OTHERS. HE EXPECTED HE WOULD BE RELEASED SOON. HOWEVER, MOTLANA SAID HE EXPECTED HE WOULD INVARIABLY BE BACK IN PRISON AS "ONE CAN NEVER DROP OUT OF THE MOVEMENT ONCE ONE IS INVOLVED".

7. MOTLANA SAID SPIRITS OF OTHER DETAINEES WERE "VERY GOOD" EXCEPT SOME WITH FAMILIES WERE "BREAKING". HE MENTIONED LEONARD MOSALA AS ONE ABOUT WHOM HE WAS PARTICULARLY WORRIED.

8. MOTLANA CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT POLITICAL ACTION IN SOWETO WAS AT A LOW EBB, ALTHOUGH POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS REMAINS HIGH. HE SAID THERE WAS MUCH CONCERN AMONG THE DETAINEES THAT STUDENTS WERE NOT GETTING THE EDUCATION (BANTU OR OTHERWISE) THEY NEEDED AS "THEY ARE THE FUTURE LEADERS OF THE NATION". HE DID SAY THAT AT LEAST PART OF THE QUIET WAS BECAUSE NOBODY WANTED TO PROLONG THE PERIODS OF DETENTION FOR THOSE STILL IN PRISON BY CAUSING VIOLENCE.

9. IN CONCLUSION, MOTLANA EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT HIS SON

BEING REFUSED ENTRY TO A UNIVERSITY. HE SAID IT WAS A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN TO HIM AND BOTH POLOFF AND ERASMUS PROMISED TO SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE ABOUT GAINING ADMITTANCE FOR MOTLANA'S SON. ERASMUS, IN PARTICULAR, SAID HE WOULD TRY TO PROD EDUCATION OFFICIALS INTO CHANGING THEIR STAND. MOTLANA NOTED THAT HIS SON HAD BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO ATTEND THE (WHITE) UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND EVEN THOUGH HE (MOTLANA) WAS AN ALUMNUS OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL AND PAID INTO THE ALUMNI FUND. CATCHING ERASMUS OFF GUARD, HE TEASED "WHEN MY PEOPLE TAKE OVER, I AS HEALTH MINISTER WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT".

10. COMMENT: AS A WOULD-BE NATIONALIST MP, ERASMUS WAS CLEARLY AFFECTED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF MEETING MOTLANA IN PRIOSN. HE NOTED AFTERWARDS, " I WAS ASHAMED" AND THAT "MOTLANA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS A GREAT MAN. THESE ARE THE MEN WE NEED TO BUILD THIS COUNTRY". THIS WAS SOMEWHAT OF A GAMBLE FOR ERASMUS, IN DANGER OF BEING SEEN AS TOO COZY WITH BLACK NATIONALISTS AND MEDDLESOME AMERICANS. NOENTHELESS, HE WAS OF THE OPINION IT WAS A "MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE".

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